

Unit 2: Colonial Crossroads

5th Grade Humanities

35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Essential Questions

- What were the causes and consequences of European exploration and settlement in the Americas for Indigenous, African, and European peoples?
- How did the sharing and blending of agricultural and technological knowledge influence the development of early North American settlements?
- How did the experiences, cultures, and values of African, Indigenous, and European people shape their perspectives during the Age of Exploration?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: Geography, environment, and human needs influenced the development and economic landscape of the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies.

- Analyze maps to understand how the geographic location and environmental characteristics of each colonial region affected settlement patterns and economic choices.
- Identify natural and human resources used in colonial economies.
- Explain how the contributions of Indigenous, African, and European peoples supported regional economies and economic development.

EU 2: Colonial economies and political systems were shaped by global power struggles, local needs, and diverse cultural contributions.

- Describe the role of money, trade, and global networks in shaping colonial economies.
- Evaluate how cultural knowledge and expertise from African, Indigenous, and European peoples influenced trade, agriculture, and craftsmanship in the colonies.

EU 3: Colonial systems of government, resistance, and civic participation laid the foundations for American democratic ideals.

- Compare different political structures and decision-making processes used in colonial communities, including tribal councils, town halls, and representative governments.
- Examine key colonial documents to understand evolving ideas about governance and the consent of the governed.
- Explore how individuals and groups resisted oppression during the colonial era and how these acts contributed to calls for independence.

Standards

CT Social Studies Frameworks Standards:

5.Geo.2.a: Use maps to explain the relationship between the location of the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies, and the environmental characteristics of each region (e.g., New Amsterdam, New France, Jamestown, Plymouth, Saint Augustine).

5.Eco.5. a.: Describe the role of money and currency in trade during the Colonial Era (e.g., British and Spanish coins, tobacco, wampum, paper money).

5.Eco.14. a.: Explain how the desire for global power and influence led to the exploitation of colonies (e.g., Spanish galleon, Triangle Trade, Dutch East India Company, British East India Company).

5.His.9. a.: Summarize how the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut represented new ideas about government (e.g., enfranchisement, representative government, consent of the governed).

Unit 2: Colonial Crossroads

5th Grade Humanities

35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

5.Eco.3. a.: Identify examples of resources used to produce goods and services throughout colonial settlements in the New England, Middle, and Southern regions (e.g., indentured and slave labor, natural resources, tools, machines).

5.Eco.4. a.: Compare the reasons for different areas of specialization and trade among individuals and businesses in New England, Middle, and Southern colonies (e.g., availability and access to natural resources, hydropower, labor, trade routes).

5.Eco.4. b.: Analyze how the abilities and expertise that individuals from the African Diaspora brought with them to the colonies contributed to economic specialization and trade (e.g., West African rice cultivation, metal working, and basket weaving).

5.His.14. c.: Describe resistance movements, both individual and group, against oppression in the Colonial Era (e.g., Stono Rebellion, Pontiac Rebellion, New English Canaan).

5.His.14. d.: Explain Connecticut's connection to the transatlantic slave trade (e.g., New London's deep-water ports, Wethersfield-constructed ship *The Tryall*).

5.Civ.4. a.: Compare how political systems were used to make rules that establish community leadership and protect freedoms for various groups in the Colonial Era (e.g., town hall meetings, tribal council, juries).

5.His.16. a.: Use evidence to develop a claim about a significant person, place, or event in Connecticut during the Colonial Era (e.g., Pequot War, Connecticut Witch Trials, Charter Oak).

5.Civ.8. a.: Identify the civic virtues and democratic principles that contributed to the rejection of British parliamentary rule of the North American colonies.

5.Inq.1. a.: Identify concepts, ideas, and interpretations associated with compelling and supporting questions about early United States history.

5.Inq.1. b.: Explain how supporting questions help answer compelling questions in an inquiry about United States history.

5.Inq.1.c: Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration the different opinions people have about how to answer the questions.

5.Inq.2. a.: Apply disciplinary knowledge and practices to demonstrate an understanding of United States history content.

5.Inq.3. a.: Gather relevant evidence from multiple sources about a person, event, or issue in United States history while using the origin, structure, and context to guide selection.

5.Inq.3. b.: Identify evidence responses to a compelling question while determining among fact and opinion to determine the credibility of multiple sources.

5.Inq.3. c.: Use evidence to develop claims in response to a compelling question by using evidence related to early United States history.

5.Inq.4. a.: Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources about United States history.

5.Inq.4. b.: Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data.

5.Inq.4. c.: Critique arguments and explanations.

5.Inq.4. d.: Present a summary of arguments and explanations about early United States history using print, oral, and digital technologies in classrooms, schools, and out-of-school contexts.

5.Inq.4. e.: Explain the challenges and opportunities, both present and past, in addressing local, regional, and global problems in United States history.

5.Inq.4. f.: Use a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to evaluate and implement strategies to address problems in classrooms and schools.

Unit 2: Colonial Crossroads

5th Grade Humanities

35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 5 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4.a: Use context (e.g., cause/effect relationships and comparisons in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4.b: Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., photograph, photosynthesis).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4.c: Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.6: Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships (e.g., however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.2: Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.3: Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.5: Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.6: Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.7: Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.8: Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.9: Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.a: Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.b: Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.c: Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.d: Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Unit 2: Colonial Crossroads

5th Grade Humanities

35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.a: Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.b: Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.c: Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., in contrast, especially).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.d: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.e: Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.a: Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.b: Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.c: Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.d: Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.e: Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.5: With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 5 here.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.6: With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of two pages in a single sitting.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.7: Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.8: Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9.a: Apply grade 5 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or a drama, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., how characters interact]").

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9.b: Apply grade 5 Reading standards to informational texts (e.g., "Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point[s]").

Unit 2: Colonial Crossroads

5th Grade Humanities

35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

Competency 1: Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

Competency 2: Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

Competency 3: Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

Competency 4: Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

Competency 5: Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

Unit Content Overview

1. Development and Economic Landscape of US colonies

- Explore physical and environmental features of the three colonial regions (New England, Middle, Southern).
- Use physical and political maps to identify colonial locations and natural resources.
- Identify types of labor in each region (e.g., enslaved labor, indentured servitude, family farming).
- Determine differences in economic activities: shipbuilding, farming, trade, etc..
- Understand the influence of African, Indigenous, and European expertise on agriculture and industry (e.g., rice cultivation, metalwork, basket weaving).

2. Shaping of Colonial Economies and Political Systems

- Investigate barter systems and currency types (e.g., wampum, tobacco, coins, paper money).
- Explore trade networks and economic interdependence across colonies and with Europe.
- Understand the influence of global trading companies (Dutch East India Co., British East India Co.).
- Explore the role of enslaved and free African labor in the economy and their specialized skills.

3. Foundations of an American Democracy

- Determine forms of governance: town meetings, colonial assemblies, tribal councils, juries.
- Investigate the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut as an early model of representative government.
- Explore acts of resistance to oppression (e.g., Stono Rebellion, Pontiac's Rebellion).
- Determine Connecticut's involvement in events like the Pequot War, Witch Trials, and the Charter Oak.
- Understand early civic virtues and democratic principles that led to tensions with British rule.

Vocabulary and Key Terms: New England, Middle, and Southern colonies, colonial maps, Jamestown, Plymouth, New Amsterdam, New France, Saint Augustine, British coins, Spanish coins, tobacco, wampum, paper money, colonial trade, Spanish galleon, Triangle Trade, Dutch East India Company, British East India Company, Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, enfranchisement, representative government, consent of the governed, indentured labor, enslaved labor, natural resources, colonial tools, colonial machines, specialization, trade routes, hydropower, West African rice cultivation, African metalworking, African basket weaving, Stono Rebellion, Pontiac Rebellion, New English Canaan, New

Unit 2: Colonial Crossroads

5th Grade Humanities

35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

London ports, Wethersfield shipbuilding, The Tryall, town hall meetings, tribal councils, colonial juries, Pequot War, Connecticut Witch Trials, Charter Oak, triangular trade, cash crops, plantations, Puritans, Pilgrims, Quakers, colonial assemblies, royal governors, self-government, economy, artisans, apprentices, religious freedom, colonization, European powers, Native nations, resistance, cooperation, cultural exchange, trade routes, navigation acts, colonial daily life, colonial education, dissent, taxation, land ownership, geographic features, regional economies, ports, shipbuilding, agriculture, natural resources, alliances, conflicts

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- ELA, Science

Daily Learning Objectives with *TWPS*

Students will be able to...

- Identify the geographic locations of the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies on a map.
 - *How might geography influence where people choose to settle?*
- Describe the environmental characteristics of each colonial region.
 - *In what ways did climate and natural resources shape how people lived in each region?*
- Explain how geography impacted the economic activities of each colonial region.
 - *How would life in a farming colony differ from life in a trading colony?*
- Compare the natural resources used by the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies.
 - *Why were some resources more valuable in certain colonies than in others?*
- Use maps to analyze the importance of rivers, ports, and coastal access for trade.
 - *Why would it be beneficial to establish a home near a river? What would the challenges be?*
- Describe how Indigenous groups interacted with and shaped their environments.
 - *What can we learn about a group's values by how they use the land around them?*
- Explain how European settlers changed the environment of the colonies.
 - *How do decisions about land use reveal power and priorities?*
- Explain how trade developed in the colonies.
 - *What makes trade between people or regions necessary?*
- Identify the types of currency used in colonial America.
 - *What would be challenging about using different types of currency?*
- Describe bartering and how it was used when formal currency was unavailable.
 - *What are the benefits and limits of bartering?*
- Explain why different colonial regions specialized in different products.
 - *How does what you produce shape who you trade with?*
- Describe how enslaved and indentured labor supported colonial economies.
 - *Who benefited the most and the least from these labor systems?*
- Analyze how West African knowledge influenced colonial agriculture.
 - *How can cultural knowledge change an entire economy?*
- Explain how global trade connected the colonies to Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean.
 - *Why is global trade important?*
- Compare how different European powers used their colonies for economic gain.
 - *Why do empires value colonies, and at what cost?*

Unit 2: Colonial Crossroads

5th Grade Humanities

35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

- Describe the cultures of Indigenous nations present during colonization.
 - *How do we honor Indigenous perspectives when studying early American history?*
- Explain how African, Indigenous, and European people interacted in the colonies.
 - *What happens when different cultures meet in a shared space?*
- Identify examples of cultural blending in colonial daily life.
 - *How can traditions survive—or change—when cultures collide?*
- Explain how perspectives on land, labor, and community differed among groups.
 - *Why is it important to consider multiple viewpoints in history?*
- Analyze a primary source to identify the voice and perspective represented.
 - *Whose voices are heard in historical documents—and whose are missing?*
- Explain how colonial governments were organized in different regions.
 - *Who had power in colonial governments, and who didn't?*
- Describe the purpose of town hall meetings and representative assemblies.
 - *Why would people want a say in how they're governed?*
- Analyze how the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut introduced new ideas about government.
 - *How can a government document reflect the values of the people it represents?*
- Compare colonial political systems to Indigenous governance (e.g., tribal councils).
 - *What makes a system of government fair or unfair to different groups?*
- Explain how civic virtues contributed to colonial calls for independence.
 - *What civic responsibilities do people have when they see injustice?*
- Describe how African and Indigenous people resisted oppression in colonial America.
 - *What does resistance tell us about power, hope, and survival?*
- Analyze the causes and consequences of the Stono Rebellion and Pontiac's Rebellion.
 - *How can rebellion be both dangerous and necessary?*
- Explain the role of protest and resistance in colonial society.
 - *What strategies did people use to fight for their rights—and how effective were they?*
- Describe Connecticut's colonial conflicts, like the Pequot War and Witch Trials.
 - *What can these events teach us about fear, control, and justice?*
- Use evidence to make a claim about a significant colonial event in Connecticut.
 - *How can we use evidence to explain why an event matters today?*
- Use historical sources to identify bias and perspective.
 - *How does who tells the story affect how we understand it?*
- Write about a major event in colonial America.
 - *How does imagining someone else's experience deepen our understanding of history?*
- Explain how geography, economy, culture, government, and resistance all shaped colonial life.
 - *What legacy did the colonial era leave on the United States we live in today?*

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Paragraph frames and sentence starters
- Teacher modeling
- Think-write-pair-share and small-group discussions
- Graphic organizers

Unit 2: Colonial Crossroads

5th Grade Humanities

35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Word walls with visuals (Venn Diagrams)
- Small group instruction
- Visual exemplars with teacher and student critiques
- Text and video chunking
- Spiraling back to guiding questions
- Multiple CFUs
- Close reading with text-dependent questions

EL Differentiation Strategies

- Word Banks and Word Walls with visuals
- TWPS (Think, write, pair, share)
- Pre-reading strategies
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Explicit teacher modeling
- Key vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- Strategic Grouping
- Non-verbal assessments

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now
- Academic Discourse
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Homework
- Performance Task -- “Colonial Crossroads: Events that Shaped an Era”
 - Teacher’s rubric/scoring guide

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz: Vocabulary terms and definitions (EU1, EU2, and EU3)
- Listen/Interpret FIAB
- Unit Task: “Colonial Crossroads: Events that Shaped an Era” (EU1, EU2 and EU3)

Unit 2: Colonial Crossroads
5th Grade Humanities
35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Unit Task
Unit Task Name: “Colonial Crossroads: Events that Shaped an Era” Description: Students will work independently to choose an event from 1600-1760 to research. This event must be one that helped shape colonial America. Students will create a Google slide deck that will use visuals, writing, and a timeline to explain how their chosen event impacted Early America. Students will then write an expository piece in preparation of sharing their slideshow. The project will culminate in a classroom showcase called “Colonial Crossroads: Stories That Shaped a Nation,” where students present their slide decks and reflect on how our America today was shaped but such events. Evaluation: Teacher’s Scoring Guide

Unit Resources
● Google Classroom ● The New Americans: Colonial Times: 1620-1689 (The American Story) ● NewsEla ● Readworks ● PBS Learning Media ● Library of Congress